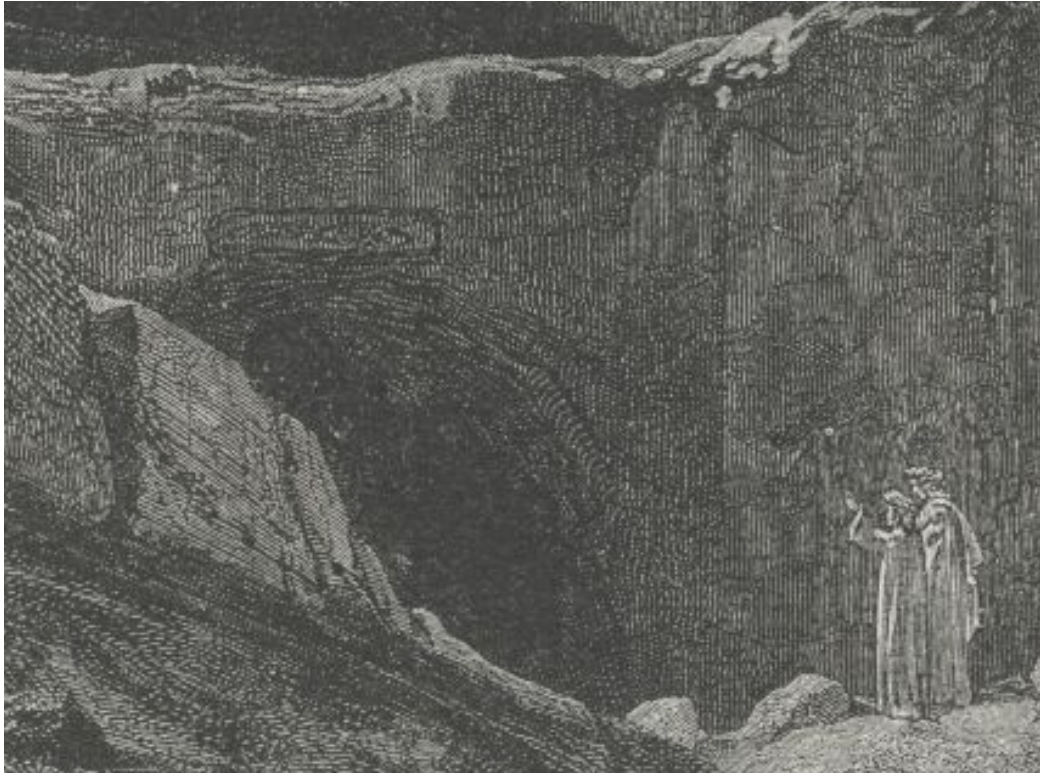


Circles of Hell (The Portal, 1st and 2nd)



Over a
portal's
lofty
arch
inscrib'd

"THROUGH me the way is to the city dolent ;
Through me the way is to eternal dole;
Through me the way among the people lost.

Justice incited my sublime Creator
Created me divine Omnipotence,
The highest Wisdom and the primal Love.

Before me there were no created things,
Only eterne, and I eternal last.
All hope abandon, ye who enter in!"

To (the) rear (of) me was the task of power divine,
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I (this portal)(will) endure (last).

(Behind me, being left behind, was God's divine, supreme wisdom and God's primeval love.)

(Ahead of me, except the eternity that must be endured, is nothing that was created by God)

“Through me you pass into the city of woe:

Through me you pass into eternal pain:

Through me among the people lost for aye.

Justice the founder of my fabric mov'd:

All hope abandon ye who enter here.”

(Through the portal, into a city of grief, misfortune, sadness.

Through the portal into eternal pain.

Through the portal to be among those people that are lost forever)

(Those who enter this portal lose all hope.)

“Let us descend now into the blind world,”

Began the Poet, pallid utterly;

Chris,
Can you save me?



The candidate during the time is divested of all his apparel (shirt excepted) and furnished with a pair of drawers kept in the lodge for the use of candidates. The candidate is then blindfolded, his left foot bare, his right in a slipper, his left breast and arm naked, and a rope called a Cable-tow round his neck and left arm, [the rope is not put round the arm in all lodges] in which posture the candidate is conducted to the door where he is caused to give, or the conductor gives three distinct knocks, which are answered by three from within; the conductor gives one more, which is also answered by one from within. The door is then partly

opened and the Senior Deacon generally asks, ‘Who comes there? Who comes there? Who comes there?’ (A Not-See)

The conductor, alias the Junior Deacon answers, “A poor blind candidate who has long been desirous of having and receiving a part of the rights and benefits of this worshipful lodge, dedicated (some say erected) to God, and held forth to the holy order of St. John, as all true fellows and brothers have done who have gone this way before him.” (of St. JOHN)

Of the first circle, that surrounds th' abyss.

lamentations none, but only sighs,
sorrow without torment,
Of infants and of women and of men

they sinned not; and if they merit had,
'Tis not enough, because they had not baptism
Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest;

(These people did not sin, but their merit alone is still not enough to escape the sorrows of the uncreated world. They were not baptized into the Christian faith that you hold.)

And if they were before Christianity, In the right manner they adored not
God; And among such as these am I myself.

(And if they were born before Christianity existed, they were not adoring God in the right way. The poet-guide identifies himself as one of these)

these of sin
Were blameless; and if aught they merited,
It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,
The portal to thy faith. If they before
The Gospel liv'd, they serv'd not God aright;
And among such am I. For these defects,
And for no other evil, we are lost;

“Only so far afflicted, that we live
Desiring without hope.”



Suspended in that Limbo many a soul
Of mighty worth.

*(Here, a community and castle of the many great spirits and philosophers
favored in heaven by their great works)*

My sage guide leads me, from that air serene,
Into a climate ever vex'd with storms:

And to a part I come where no light shines.

From the first circle I descended thus

Down to the second,



There Minos stands.
Canto V., line 4.

There standeth Minos horribly, and snarls;
Examines the transgressions at the entrance;
Judges, and sends according as he girds him.

when the spirit evil-born
Cometh before him, wholly it confesses;

And this discriminator of transgressions
Seeth what place in Hell is meet for it;

They go by turns each one unto the judgment;
They speak, and hear, and then are downward hurled.

now am I come There where much lamentation strikes upon me.
I came into a place mute of all light, Which bellows as the sea does in a
tempest,



The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on.
Canto V., lines 32, 33.

The carnal malefactors

A noise as of a sea in
tempest torn By warring
winds. The stormy blast
of hell With restless fury
drives the spirits on
Whirl'd round and
dash'd amain with sore
annoy.

I understood that to this
torment sad
The carnal sinners are
condemn'd, in whom
Reason by lust is
sway'd.

“Love brought us to one death: Caina waits
The soul, who spilt our life.”

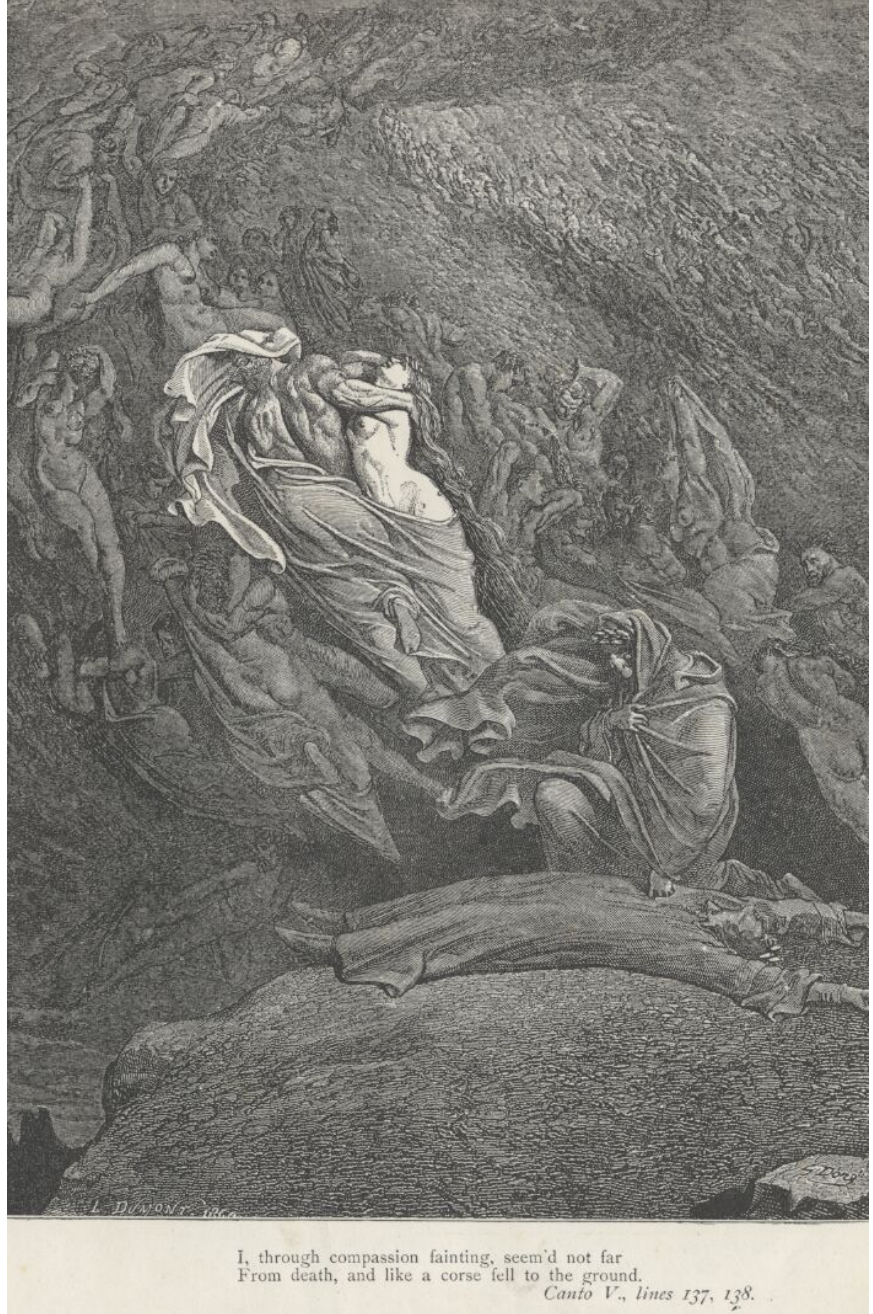
If thou art bent to
know the primal root,
From whence our love
gat being, I will do,
As one, who weeps
and tells his tale.

One day
For our delight we
read of Lancelot,
How him love thrall'd.

...

The book and writer
both
Were love's
purveyors. In its
leaves that day We
read no more.”

I through compassion
fainting,



seem'd not far

From death, and like a corpse fell to the ground.



In its leaves that day
We read no more.
Canto V., lines 134, 135.